

**City of Northampton, MA
Transportation and Parking Commission**

January 19, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by: Beth A. Kaplowitt

1. DPW Director Donna LaScaleia called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and announced that there would be audio/video recording of this virtual meeting.

Members present and absent/introductions:

Member	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director, Chair	X	
Jody Kasper, Chief of Police, Vice Chair	X	
Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability	X	
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement Administrator	X	
Jim Nash, City Council Vice President	X	
Karen Foster, Ward 2 City Councilor	X	
Debin Bruce, Citizen	X	
Gary Hartwell, Citizen	Absent	
Adam Novitt, Citizen	Absent	
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	X	
Advisor	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Maggie Chan, DPW Traffic Engineer	X	
Staff	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Cyndi Quinn, DPW Administration Manager	X	
Beth A. Kaplowitt, DPW Clerk	X	

2. Public comment

- None.

3. Approval of minutes from previous meetings: September 15, 2020 and November 17, 2020

- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the September 15, 2020 and November 17, 2020 meetings.	Wayne Feiden	Jody Kasper	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0

4. Reports from departments and subcommittees/announcements/presentations

- o Department of Public Works (DPW) - Director Donna LaScaleia
 - The successful North Farms Road project is substantially complete;

- ❖ Unfortunately, there was a water main break in the middle of the new asphalt. The remaining damage to the asphalt from that repair will be fixed in the spring;
- The Damon Road and Route 9 Roundabout projects, which will involve a number of utility pole relocations, will resume in the spring.
- Department of Planning and Sustainability – Director Wayne Feiden
 - The mayor has approved three projects:
 - ❖ Florence Center - mostly wheelchair curb cuts;
 - ❖ Pleasant Street – this is the second part of the project, which will go from Hockanum Road to the roundabout;
 - ❖ The third project will involve Leonard Street and Haydenville Road, and will be advertised in the future.

5. Matters before the Commission

- Director LaScaleia explained that the following three agenda items are a response to an influx of traffic and congestion due to people wanting recreational access to the river during the summer. The DPW has done a thorough review of the situation and the Police Department (PD), the TPC, and Councilors Jarrett and LaBarge have also looked for solutions and the result is the following three proposed ordinances. They are an attempt to provide an enhanced level of traffic safety.

a) Proposed Ordinance for a Stop Sign on Scanlon Avenue at Florence Road

- ❖ Director LaScaleia read the proposed Ordinance into the record;
- ❖ A motion was proposed and seconded.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send 21.XXX An Ordinance Relative to a Stop Sign on Scanlon Avenue to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Jami Albro-Fisher	Jody Kasper	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0

- ❖ The DPW reviewed the network of streets and found that there were more than 6,500 cars per day on Florence Road. This meets the volume requirement of the warrant;
- ❖ There was no discussion;
- ❖ A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

b) Proposed Ordinance for Stop Signs on Cross Street at Florence Road and Bliss Street

- ❖ Director LaScaleia read the proposed Ordinance into the record. She then said that a scrivener’s amendment will be made before this proposed Ordinance is submitted to City Council;
- ❖ A motion was proposed and seconded.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send 21.XXX An Ordinance Relative to Stop Signs on Cross Street to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Jim Nash	Jody Kasper	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0

- ❖ The DPW’s assessment of the overall area showed the same 6,000 + cars per day as on Florence Road. Bliss Street has long-standing sight line issues caused by a hedge, a mailbox, a utility pole and a tree;

- ❖ Councilor Jarrett sent notices to everyone on Cross Street by email or letter and got positive feedback on both of the proposed stop signs;
- ❖ A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

c) Proposed Ordinance for Cross Street No Parking Zones

- ❖ Director LaScaleia read the proposed Ordinance into the record;
- ❖ A motion was proposed and seconded.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send 21.XXX An Ordinance Relative to Parking on Cross Street to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Debin Bruce	Jody Kasper	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0

- ❖ Director LaScaleia said that the DPW is making efforts to provide some level of relief to the type of congestion that was experienced last summer. Director LaScaleia and Chief Kasper walked the area, spoke to Councilors Jarrett and LaBarge and heard testimonies at TPC meetings. The DPW’s Engineering Department did a thorough assessment of the site conditions and this proposed Ordinance is the result. By adding No Parking zones, it addresses parking, drainage and driveway exiting problems;
- ❖ Chief Kasper said that they did the best they could to try and find a middle ground, since residents do want to be welcoming to and have interactions with visitors to the area, but access must always be maintained for emergency vehicles. At the height of the problem last summer, there were more than thirty cars parked on the street. The new proposed No Parking zones will allow parking for only 8 – 10 vehicles;
- ❖ Several Councilors expressed appreciation for the thorough research done by the DPW and the PD;
- ❖ A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously

• **Updates on Certain Previously Submitted Traffic Calming Requests**

d) Traffic Calming Request for South Street

- ❖ Director LaScaleia said that this TC request is being presented as an example of how the new Traffic Calming (TC) process works. It comes to the TPC today after the DPW and the PD have already performed some data assessments;
- ❖ Councilor Thorpe and a resident appeared at a prior TPC meeting to say that they felt that speed limits on South Street were being disregarded;
- ❖ The PD’s review of collision data over a 5 year look-back period showed nothing notable. A review of speed data recorded on a covert speed data box showed an average speed of 43 mph during a one week period in August 2020 during which time the speed of 62,000 vehicles was recorded. The PD installed temporary in-street paddle boards to show drivers where the crosswalks are located, which did lead to lower speeds. The PD will also do some intermittent speed assessments in the future;

- ❖ The DPW looked at the roadway design and construction. It was determined that the area was signed appropriately and that there were no missing signs. The road has gone past the point of mill and overlay and is at the point where a full reclaim must be done at some point. It is a very wide street so it will be a costly project, and there are currently no reconstruction plans. Also, when trucks hit the deteriorated roadway, it probably increases the appearance of speed;
 - ❖ The two final recommendations are to increase speed monitoring enforcement and install in-street pedestrian paddle boards (keeping in mind that these boards are expensive to buy and replace, get hit frequently and can only be used seasonally);
 - ❖ The request is now considered closed. A detailed database is maintained of all requests, research done and recommendations made;
 - ❖ Several Commission members expressed their appreciation to Chief Kasper and Director LaScaleia for their work on the TC process. They feel that it is a great improvement over the previous system, and makes it clear to all interested parties that decisions made and recommendations offered are based on data that is collected in the affected area and carefully analyzed;
 - ❖ There was some additional discussion by Commissioners about regulations regarding lane width changes, line striping, courtesy one way traffic, speed limit changes and the width of DPW plow blades.
- e) Traffic Calming Request for Emerson Way
- ❖ James Greenman came to the TPC regarding speeding problems on Emerson Way, and he also submitted a TC request. The request has not been put on any TPC agenda because Emerson Way is a private way;
 - ❖ The DPW and the PD want to be responsive to all City residents, but they are constrained by the fact that only public ways are within their purview. So, the first thing to determine was is the road in the TC request a public way. They pulled the sub-division records, which showed that the City is not responsible for any maintenance of this road. Director LaScaleia therefore told the Board at Emerson Way that the City cannot address any resources to the problem. She did have a lengthy conversation with Mr. Greenman to give him technical advice, but any responsibility for the problem resides with the Emerson Road residents and not the City;
 - ❖ The PD found only one minor accident in the last 5 years, did not do a speed study and recommends that the TC request be closed;
 - ❖ This item was added to today's TPC agenda because Director LaScaleia is aware that Councilors frequently get complaints from residents that the DPW is not responsive;
 - ❖ Councilor LaBarge brought up a similar situation that she is aware of and wondered if the residents of a private road have any legal recourse to change the deed so that the City would be responsible for roadway maintenance. Several TPC Committee members said that this type of situation is not within the purview of the TPC and

suggested that the residents consider consulting an attorney if they need legal advice.

6. New Business

- None.

7. Adjourned at 5:11 p.m.

- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
Adjourn.	Debin Bruce	Jim Nash	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0